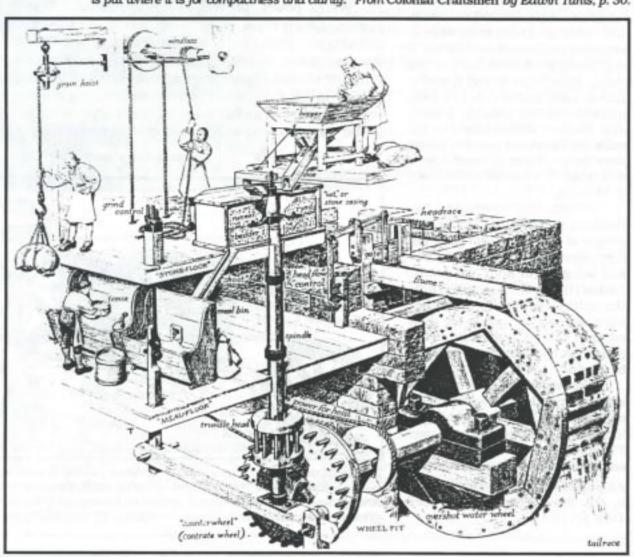


# THE INDIANA JUNIOR HISTORIAN

PUBLISHED BY THE INDIANA HISTORICAL BUREAU, STATE OF INDIANA

# 19th Century Indiana Grist Mills

"The mechanism of a country gristmill, driven by an overshot water wheel. The hopper platform would normally stand on the 'stone-floor' inside the mill instead of floating in the air over the millrace, as it does here. It is put where it is for compactness and clarity." From Colonial Craftsmen by Edwin Tunis, p. 30.



# **Focus**

Have you ever seen an old grain mill? They are hard to find today. Long ago, wooden mills creaked and shuddered as giant millstones. powered waterwheels, ground grain into flour or meal. A grain mill was so important to the early settlers that the location of the mill often determined the site of a town or city. The mill was often the place in the community where farmers would gather with their sacks of grain and exchange news with distant neighbors. It was not unusual to travel twenty miles to reach the mill.

Mills requiring waterwheels for power were located on rivers and streams. These mills were so important to the farmers that paths and roads were soon built to the mills. Merchants found it profitable to open stores near the mills to trade with the farmers. Gradually, families settled closer to the mills and the stores and new towns were born. Many of these towns still retain the names of Milltown or Millville.

Millers, who owned and ran the mills, have been called the first people of industry. Not only did they grind grain, they would buy and sell grain or flour, set prices, counsel their customers, and host the entire countryside. Often they were not paid in money for their services but in a portion of the grain that the farmers brought to be ground.

Creaking, groaning old mills with their picturesque waterwheels no longer dot the countryside. In Indiana, in 1860, there were over 700 operating grain mills, now only a few operating mills remain.

Adapted from: "By the Old Mill Stream," by D.A. Woodliff, Cobblestone, April 1982, pp. 14-15.

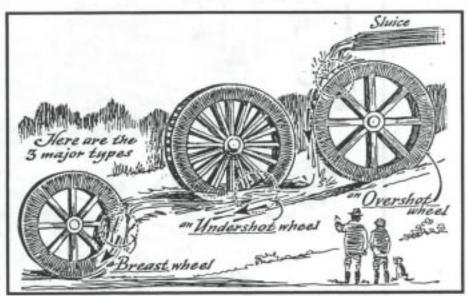
# How Does a Grain Mill Work?

Before you can cook and eat grains, they must be crushed to remove the outer shell or hull. Man has known this for thousands of years and used primitive methods to grind his grain. Pounding grain between two stones was a long and slow process.

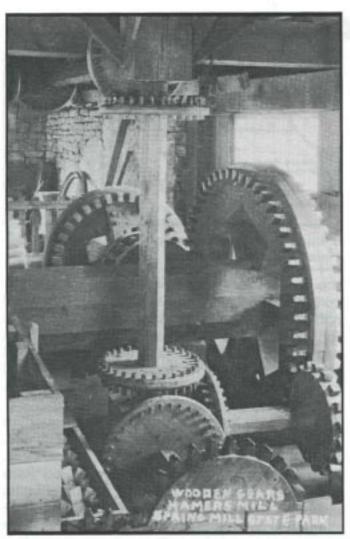
No one knows who developed the idea of attaching a power source to large flat stones to grind grain, but it was far more efficient than pounding or grinding grain by hand. The mill, whether it was powered by humans, water, or horses used two flat, circular stones as large as fifteen inches across and four inches thick. One stone sat on top of the other like the layers of a cake. The bottom stone didn't move and was called the bedder. The top stone had a hole in the center that went all the way through the stone. It was wider at the top of the hole than at the bottom. The grain was put into this hole and was crushed between the two stones. It is much easier to look at the picture on the right to get a good understanding of how the mill operated.

Water power proved to be the most efficient method of powering early mills. A large wooden wheel was constructed by a millwright. The wheel was attached to a shaft which turned wooden gears which turned another shaft which turned the grinding stones. There were several types of waterwheels, and it is easy to see from the illustrations how each one worked. The overshot wheel was the most efficient type of wheel. The weight of the water, not its speed, turned the wheel.

Continued on page 3



The breast wheel turned by the amount of water flowing through a canal lock. It was only 65% efficient. The undershot wheel turned by the stream's speed. It was 30% efficient. The overshot wheel, turned by the weight of the water, was 75% efficient. From: ABC Book of Early Americana by Eric Sloane, [p. 51].



# How Does a Grain Mill Work?

continued from page 2

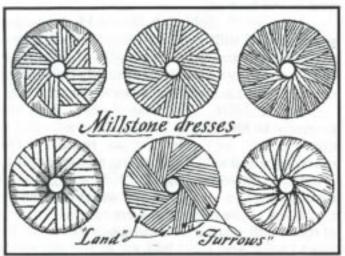
The water power also helped the miller sift or bolt the grain. When the grain was sifted through a cloth (silk was often used), the finest flour and meal went into one bag, and the courser parts of the grain (such as middlings from flour and grits from corn) went into another bag.

Eventually steam power replaced many waterwheels. The steam-powered mills did not have to worry about the river freezing, running dry, or flooding. Steam mills didn't even have to be located on a river. It wasn't long before new technologies made the old waterwheel outdated.

### Activities

- Be creative and think of a system for grinding grain.
   Use any source of power and any type of tool or equipment in your design for a mill.
- Research the history of the grain mill after water power.

Wooden gears at Hamer Mill, Spring Mill State Park. From: Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.



The patterns cut into millstones helped the miller grind the grain. The closer the lines in the pattern, the finer the grain was ground. The patterns had to be recut every four or five years. These patterns were often copied by quiltmakers. From: Our Vanishing Landscape by Eric Sloane, p. 148.

# The Doughty Mill

"The following report is an excerpt from a survey begun by the Indiana Historical Commission in 1921. The purpose of the survey was to develop and preserve a record of archaeological and historical sites and artifacts in each county in Indiana. County representatives volunteered to collect the information and submit it to the Indiana Historical Commission. Surveys for a few counties were completed and published, but the remainder was not finished.

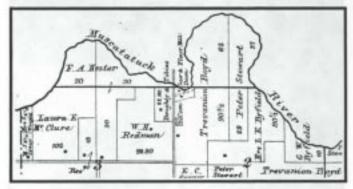
It would be hard to estimate the value of the old water-power mill in the life of our pioneer parents. These mills were instrumental in providing not only for the daily bread, but for much of the daily social life as well. They were real community centers where the farmer, while waiting for his grist, discussed with his neighbors the problems of the day— be those problems social, religious or political.

One of these old mills that served its community well for more than fifty years and was known over Southern Indiana, was located in the extreme northern part of Scott County on the Muscatatuck River — sometimes called "Big Creek." It was so truly a part of the community life, that although it ceased to operate about twenty years ago\*, people still speak of going to Doughty's Mill and do go to the site of the mill for fishing excursions and picnics. The history of the mill, gleaned from the pioneers themselves and from the records, follows:

In the summer of 1849 work began, with David Tobias as overseer and a Mr. Rodman chief carpenter. By the aid of neighbors and friends, the mill was completed by Christmas 1849.

The mill contained two sets of buhrs — one for wheat and one for corn. The machinery operating the bolting cloth that separated the bran from the flour was turned by hand. If water was plentiful, about fifty bushels of wheat per day could be ground. If there was no water, there was no grinding. The flour was of fair grade. A toll of one-eighth was taken for corn, wheat and buckwheat. Those who took grain to the mill awaited their turn for the grinding. Waiting for the grist often served as a legitimate excuse for being away from home all day.

In the spring of 1850 the mill dam was repeatedly carried away by the high waters and



Johnson Township, Scott County. From: Atlas of Scott County Indiana, 1889.

the outlook was very discouraging. Again the community came to the aid of the mill and helped construct a substantial dam 8 ft. x 16 ft. x 200 ft. Many tons of rock were hauled and thrown around the dam to make it more secure. With all these precautions, the dam was often in need of repair, for almost ever year the spring freshets carried away parts of it.

The dam formed a large mill-pond with an average depth of ten feet for a mile above the mill. This pond was often the scene of merry fishers, swimmers, ice-cutters and skaters. Many feats of bravery are still told of expert swimmers who risked their lives to rescue those unfortunate enough to have been swept over the dam into the swirling waters below. The present generation still hear of the large fish caught above the dam and in the fore-bay.

In 1894 T. Tobias & Son added another story to the mill and the roller process was installed by Pine Co., Millwrights of Louisville, Ky. Its capacity was increased to fifty barrels per day and the quality of the flour was excellent.

About 1904, T. Tobias & Son sold the property to Mr. Frank Tobias. Not wishing to operate the mill, Mr. Tobias removed the machinery and sold the building and grounds to Travanion Boyd. In April 1906, a high wind demolished the building. The wrecked timbers and a few of the fine rocks were removed. Tons of rocks still mark the foundations of one of the most useful and most historic of the old water power mills.

From: Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.

# **Mill Match**

Unscramble these mill terms and draw lines to match them to their definitions.

• rlilme	
• rimlalec	
• wlleehiml	
• pdmllion	
• eslloimnt	
• lilmmda	

- 1. the pond formed by a milldam
- one of two large circular slabs of stone between which grain is ground
- a dam constructed across a stream to build up a sufficient supply of water to turn a mill wheel
- a broad wheel fitted with flanges which is driven by the mill stream and works the mill machinery
- someone who owns or directs work done at a mill
- the strong current of water which drives the mill wheel, the channel in which the current runs

Adapted from: Joanne F. Cox. "Grist Mills of Early America and Today." This work was completed under the University of Southern Indiana project Indiana and the New Nation, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

# The Miller and the Law

A mill was vital to the life of the community. The miller's job was so important that he was excused from militia duty in peace time and jury duty. You can see from the mill map on page 10 that milling was big business. As with any business, laws were soon developed to regulate grain milling. In 1831, an Indiana law stated that the miller would take one eighth of the grain as his fee or toll for his grinding service.

Other provisions of this law stated that the miller should grind the grain in turn as the grain was brought in. There were many fights at the mill when the miller would grind someone's grain out of turn. The 1831 law stated that if the miller ground out of turn, he was subject to a \$2.50 fine (remember, the year is 1831, \$2.50 was worth more then).

The miller could be sued if he did not load and

unload the grain. By law, the miller was required to mark the bags of grain with the farmer's initials standing for his first name and his entire last name. It was illegal to mark a bag or barrel as full when it did not contain the correct amount of flour or meal.

The water to operate a mill was dammed up from a creek or a stream and released gradually to power the mill's waterwheel. Laws had to be made to regulate this aspect of milling since the damming of the water might flood a neighbor's land or wash out a stream bed. The miller had to apply for a permit to dam the stream and could be sued if he caused damage to a neighbor's property.

The laws helped to protect the customers and the neighbors of the mill and provided some regulations for this important Indiana business.

From: Revised Laws of Indiana, 1831, pp. 373-75.

# A New Farm in Indiana, 1824

January 23rd, 1824. Indiana State, Franklin Co.,

Dear Father and Friends:-

We would take this opportunity to inform you, that our family and friends are all well. On the 24th. of December 1823 the balance of our people arrived here all safe and stood the journey with credit. No purchases made amongst them yet.

We started a long letter in August last, we understood you did not get. We had a very good journey, after the first day's travel- got to Mahlon Smith's in seventeen days and stayed

four days there, left them all well.

... we bought a small farm of 125 acres and crop of corn and hogs; moved in July, got a deed and paid in full. Four hundred dollars was the price of this small farm with twenty acres well cleared- two cabins, which are comfortable in time of storm, a tolerable barn and other buildings and six good springs of water- no part too wet but it would do to plow; as to fruit trees- 130 apple, 150 peach, cherry and english plum trees plenty- all good age to begin bearing.

Our stock are small, we have two milk cows ten hogssince New Years we have salted fourteen hundred pounds of pork and beef. A history of the productions of this soil: it is good for wheat, rye, corn, oats, sweet and Irish potatoes, cabbage, tobacco, flax, hemp and any quantity of water and musk melons, turnips plenty- still growing in the field. If Franklin Taylor would wish to know the price of teaching-

\$8.00 per scholar and room plenty here.

Now something about mills, within four miles are 11 grist mills, 9 saw mills, carding and fulling and spinning machines plenty. We are settled within two miles of Fairfield one mile from the east fork of White Water, where sugar trees are plenty- the man we bo't of last season made four hundred pounds of sugar.

You may look for another letter after we get one from you. We would like to know if you are like to make sale of that land or not. No more at present. Direct your letter to Fairfield,

Franklin County, State of Indiana.

Elisha and Fanny Hughes. To Stacy Taylor,

Loudoun Co., Va.

Hillsboro Post-office.

The original of this letter is in the possession of Mrs. John. C. Odell of Delphi, Indiana, a granddaughter of the recipient, Stacy Taylor. Copied by Clarence H. Smith, New Castle, Indiana. From: Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.

### Activities

- Having a mill in the community was vital to the well-being of a farmer in early Indiana. Mr. Hughes mentions three types of mills in his letter. List them. What crops will Mr. Hughes take to any of the mills he mentioned in his letter?
- You may need to look up some of the terms he mentions in his letter, such as fulling, carding, flax, etc. These are words that were important to the early settlers in our state. Begin an Early Settlers Dictionary for your classroom and add new terms to it as you read and learn about Indiana history.
- Using a Road Atlas (your library will have one), locate Loudoun County, Virginia, and Franklin County, Indiana. We don't know how Mr. Hughes traveled or which routes he took. Using today's map, which route would you take from Loudoun County, Virginia, to Franklin County, Indiana?

# The Iglehearts of Indiana

Levi Igleheart, Jr. and his two brothers bought a grist mill in Evansville, Indiana, with the money they made from selling the family farm in 1856. The business grew steadily and after the Civil War orders for large amounts of flour began to arrive. One of the most successful of the Igleheart flours was Swans Down Family Flour, introduced in 1876. It was called Swans Down because of its softness and pure white color.

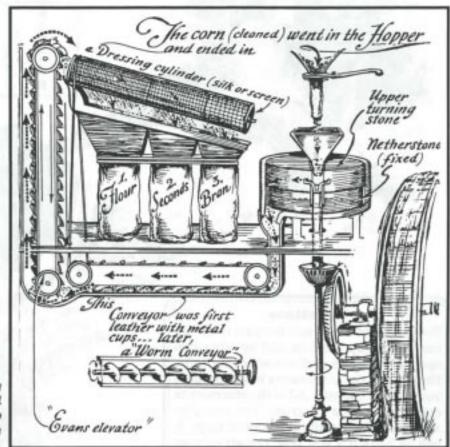
Addison Igleheart was very fond of eating cake and developed a special cake flour made of the choicest, softest parts of winter wheat. He called this new product Swans Down Cake Flour. It was a very fine flour because it was ground, sifted through a silk screen, and then ground again.

In 1895, a cake pan salesman ran out of flour to use in his demonstrations. He bought some Swans Down Cake Flour. It wasn't long before he realized that the cake flour was a better selling item than the cake pans themselves. He began to concentrate on selling the flour. Within four years, the flour was being advertised nationally in the Ladies' Home Journal. A cake baked with Swans Down won the Grand Prize at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.

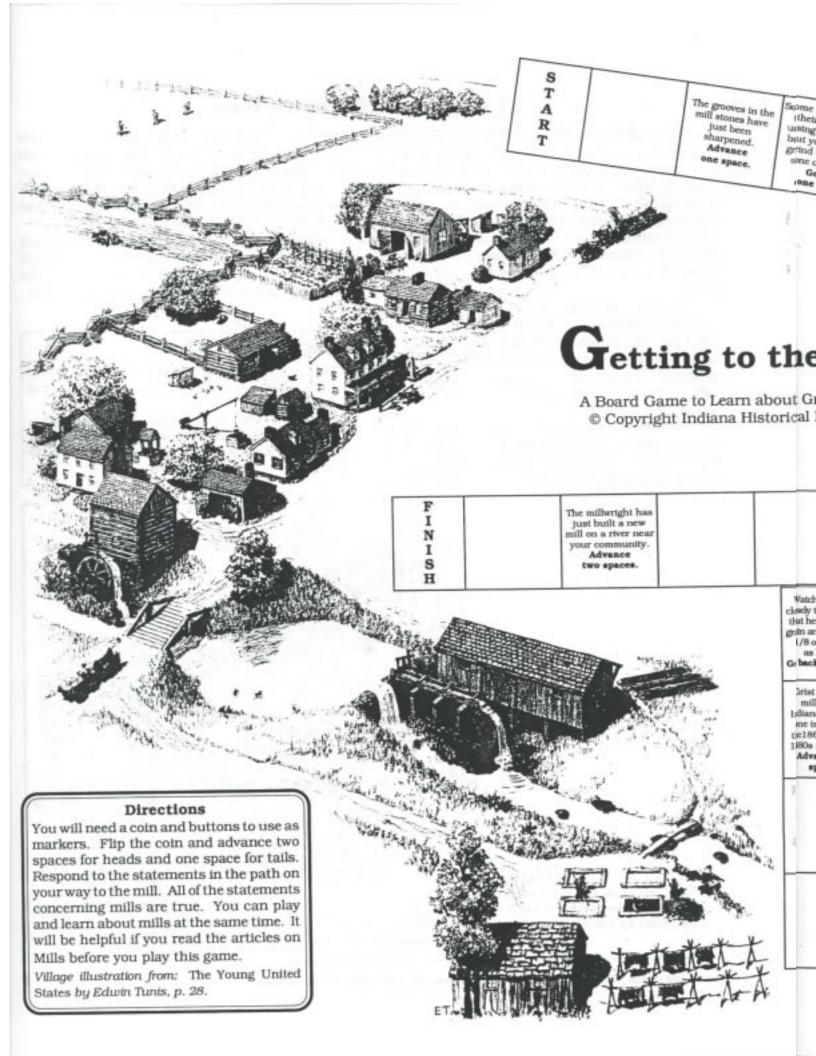
Business continued to grow, even after a fire wiped out the Igleheart Mills in 1909. A new and modern mill was built in 1910, and in 1926 the Igleheart business was sold to General Foods.

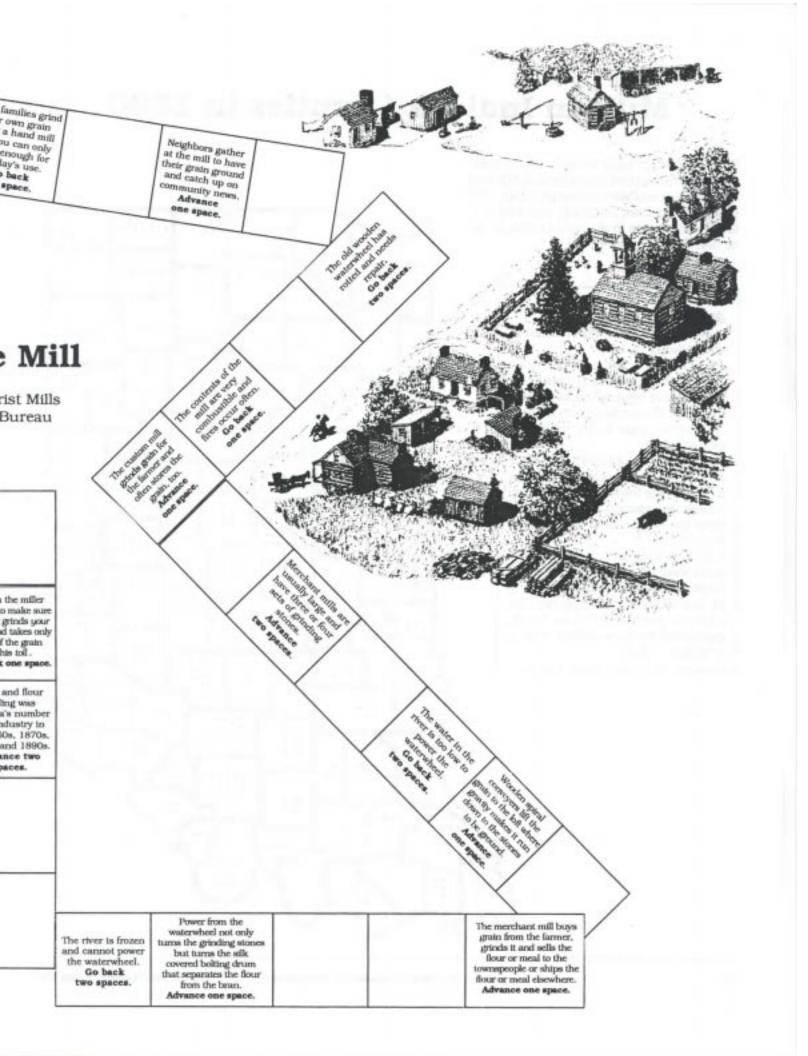
### Activities

- What other foods do you have on your shelves that are made by General Foods? Research the history of that corporation.
- Ask your mother or, better yet, your grandmother if they remember Swans Down Cake Flour? Ask them if they knew that Swans Down was an Indiana product?



The power of the waterwheel not only grinds the grain but carries the ground grain to the **Dresser** where it is sifted into bags. From Our Vanishing Landscape by Eric Sloane, p. 158.



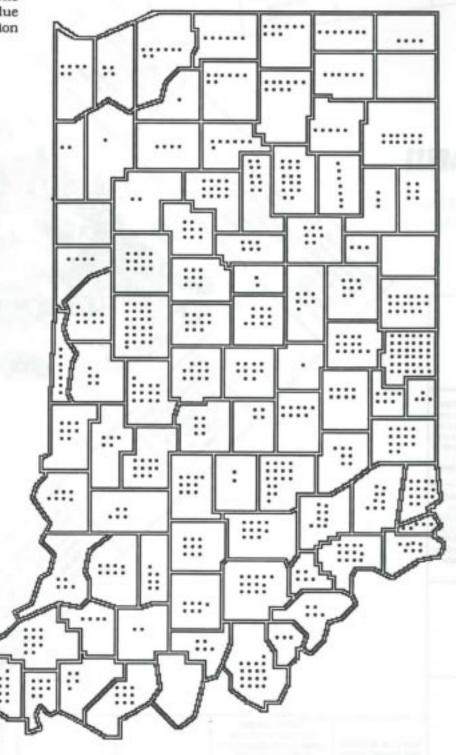


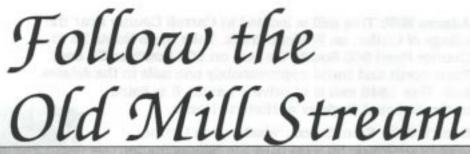
# Mills in Indiana Counties in 1860

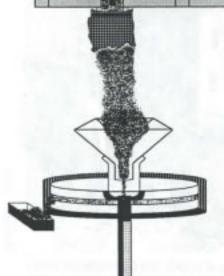
The numbers of mills in each county indicated on the map below are from the United States Census of Manufactures, 1860. The numbers may not be totally accurate due to the difficulties in obtaining information at that time.

### Activities

- How many mills were located in your county in 1860?
- · Which county had the most mills?
- Look at the northern, southern, eastern and western parts of Indiana. Are there more grain mills in one region than in the other regions? Why?
- The evidence of a mill may still be seen in your community. Look on a map of your town to see how many streets are named after a mill or have the word mill in the name of the street.
- Look at a current map of Indiana and locate the towns that have mill as part of the town name. Referring to the Indiana mill map on this page, see how many mill towns you can locate compared to the number of mills in 1860.







A visit to a mill is a great field trip! The investigation of grist mills is an important addition to the study of pioneer life and the economic history of Indiana and the United States.

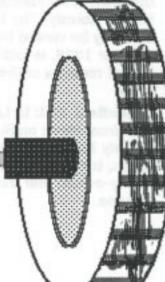
Pages 11-14 provide tour information, prepared by Jane Nolan and Linda Weintraut, historical consultants. This information is designed as a follow-up to the slide carousel and script, Follow the Old Mill Stream, also prepared by Nolan and Weintraut. The information has been incorporated into this reprint of "19th Century Indiana Grist Mills," the September 1991 issue of The Indiana Junior Historian.

The map on page 14 shows the approximate location of each mill. More specific directions to the thirteen representative mills are on pages 12-13. Information is accurate as of December 1990.

To prepare for your mill visit, please check the schedule for each mill to be sure that it will be open when you arrive. Some mills are privately owned, and prior arrangements must be made. Otherwise, you should view these mills from the road.

Before you begin your field trip, read about the mill in a county history. Be sure to take binoculars and cameras. These mills are worth a trip!

Follow the Old Mill Stream slide carousel is available on loan from the Indiana Historical Bureau and the Indiana Humanities Council.

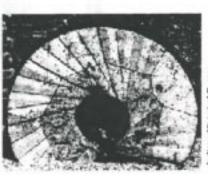


- Adams Mill: This mill is located in Carroll County near the village of Cutler, on Wildcat Creek. Take State Route 75 to County Road 500 South. Go east on 500 South to 50 East. Turn north and travel approximately one mile to the Adams Mill. This 1846 mill is in private hands. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Beck's Mill: From Salem, Washington County, take State Route 56 west past the Sillgas Station to Orchard Road. Turn left onto Orchard Road. Take the "dog leg" in Orchard Road to the right. This is Beck's Mill Road, and it passes in front of the mill. This mill is in private hands and may only be viewed from the road. This mill was built in 1864. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Bonneyville Mill: Bonneyville Mill, 1832, is operated by the Elkhart County Department of Parks and Recreation; it is part of the Bonneyville Mill County Park. It is located near Bristol, approximately 2 1/2 miles east on State Road 120 and 1/2 mile south on County Road 131. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Bridgeton Mill: Bridgeton Mill, 1870, is located in Parke County on Big Raccoon Creek. From the intersection of State Route 59 and U.S. 36, proceed south for approximately 8 1/2 miles to County Road 900 South. At the Y in the road, take the left fork. The mill is situated in Bridgeton. The Bridgeton Mill is usually open in October during the Parke County Covered Bridge Festival.
- Cox's Mills: Cox's Mills are situated on State Route 227 in the town of Middleboro, which is northeast of Richmond, in Wayne County. The 1860 brick mill is a private residence and can only be viewed from the road. The older limestone mill, 1827 or 1828, is located to the rear of the property. Archaeological remains of the millrace are located between the two mills.
- Greenfield Mill: In LaGrange County, travel east from Howe on State Route 120 to County Road 900 East. Turn north, At 750 North, turn east to the mill. This is the only family-owned mill that is still operating in Indiana.



in the Indianapolis Sunday Star, August 19, 1934.

Metamora buhrstone showing dressing pattern cut into stone to enhance grinding the grain.



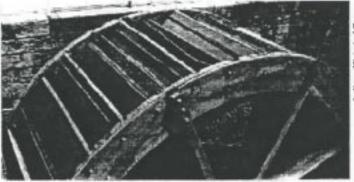
- 7. Hamer Mill: This reconstructed mill in Lawrence County is part of Spring Mill State Park. The park is located on State Route 60 approximately 3 miles east of Mitchell. During warm weather, the mill is usually open and sometimes grinding. Admission is charged to enter the park.
- 8. Mansfield Mill: From the intersection of State Route 59 and U.S. 36 in Parke County, turn south and drive approximately 5 ½ miles. Take the Mansfield Road to the town of Mansfield. During warm weather, the mill (1880/1884) is usually open from Wednesday to Sunday. Mansfield is a turbine-powered mill; the iron wheel is just "for show." It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Metamora Mill: The Metamora Mill in Franklin County is located in the restored town of Metamora approximately 7 miles west of Brookville on U.S. 52. This mill is a reconstruction of an 1845 mill and is a State Historic Site. Metamora is particularly interesting because the water to turn its wheel came from the Whitewater Canal.
- Napoleon Mill: This 1881 mill is located in the town of Napoleon, Ripley County, on U.S. 421. The advertising signs painted on the front of the mill are still faintly visible. The Napoleon Mill is not open for visitors at this time.
- 11. Red Mills: It is located in Shelby County approximately 1/2 mile south of County Road 400 North in Sugar Creek Township along the Boggstown Road. Red Mills is owned by private citizens, and it is not open for visitors at this time.

12. Vevay Mill: Situated in the county seat

- of Switzerland County, the mill at Vevay is a nineteenth-century mill powered by steam. The 1819 mill is located on Pike Street north of the courthouse. Because the mill has been in the process of restoration, be sure to contact the Vevay/Switzerland County Foundation to find out if the mill is open for visitors before you make your trip.
- 13. John Wood's Mill: In Lake County, take Interstate 65 to Merrillville. Go east on State Route 30 to Randolph Street and turn north. At the next road (73rd Avenue or County Road 330), turn east. Continue for approximately 0.9 mile to reach the Deep River County Park. The brick mill built in 1876 (original mill built in 1838) and visitor center are open daily from May through October. A nominal fee is charged. The mill is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Mill gears drawn by Oliver Evans in his 1850 book, The Young Millwright and Miller's Guide.



Millwheel at Metamora Mill

# Glossary of Milling Terms

How a mill was constructed depended upon geography-what the water source was and how far away it was. All mills did not have all of the parts that follow.

bed stone: The bottom stone of a pair of millstones. This stone does not rotate.

**bolter:** The machine that sifts or separates the flour from the bran or skin of the wheat. A piece of silk cloth usually serves as the sieve.

**buhrstone:** The hard rock that is used for the millstones.

dress: The pattern of furrows cut into a millstone.

flume: The raised trough that brings water to the waterwheel.

grist: Grain taken to the mill to be ground.

milldam: The man-made construction that holds back the water source before it enters the millrace.

millrace: The channel that brings water from the milldam to the waterwheel.

millwright: The craftsman who constructs and repairs mills.

penstock: A trough or pipe that carries water to the waterwheel.

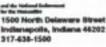
runner stone: The upper stone in a pair of millstones. This stone rotates over the bed stone.

tailrace: The channel that carries water away from the waterwheel.

toll: The amount of grain taken by the miller in payment for grinding services.











# **A**n Apple for Everyone

## Selected readings on the topic of grist mills.

- Doggett, Denzil. "Water-Powered Mills of Flat Rock River."
   Indiana Magazine of History. Vol. 32. No. 4. December, 1936.
- Fox, Jim. "The Metamora Gristmill, Metamora, Indiana" Old Mill News. Vol. 16, No. 2. Spring, 1988.

This article gives a brief history of one of Indiana's grist mills.

Kalman, Bobbie. The Gristmill.
 Oxford, New York, Toronto:
 Crabtree Publishing Company.
 1991.

This book offers a clear and easy to understand explanation of the milling process. The illustrations are simple and very helpful. A highly recommended book for students. It is part of a Historic Communities series.

 McCauley, David. Mill. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1983.

This is a delightful fictional account of the construction and working of a mill, although not a grist mill. The illustrations are wonderful and help to explain further the basic workings of any mill.

 Maginley, C.J. Historic Models of Early America and How to MakeThem. NewYork: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 1947.

Complete directions are given to construct your own model of a grist mill complete with waterwheel. For model enthusiasts only!  Nolan, Jane, and Linda Weintraut. Follow the Old Mill Stream.

Slides of Indiana mills with script may be borrowed from the Indiana Historical Bureau or the Indiana Humanities Council.

 Sloane, Eric. Diary of An American Boy. New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc. 1962.

The diary is fiction but based on everyday life of America long ago, and of course includes grist mills.

 \_\_\_\_\_ Our Vanishing Landscape. New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc. 1955.

Sloane includes a brief but very informative section concerning mills.

 Tunis, Edwin. Colonial Craftsmen and the Beginnings of American Industry. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company.

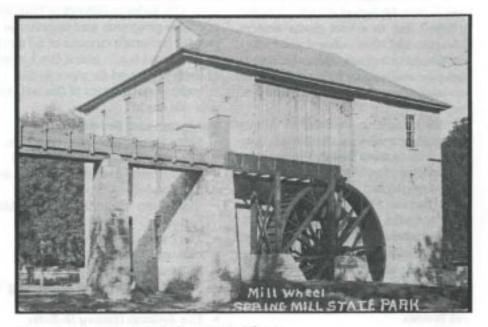
 Frontier Living. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. 1961.

The Young United
 States. New York: Thomas Y.
 Crowell Company. 1969.

The Tunis books contain wonderful drawings of early Americana, including grist and saw mills, with easy to understand explanations.

 Woodliff, D.A. "By the Old Mill Stream." Cobblestone. April, 1982.

This entire issue of Cobblestone is devoted to grain and its processing.



From: Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.

Indiana Historical Bureau 140 North Senate Avenue Room 408 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204 317-232-2535/TDD 317-232-7763



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Contributing Editors

Carole M. Allen, Janine Beckley, Paula Bongen, Alan Conant, Dani B. Pfaff, Virginia Terpening Layout and Design

Carole M. Allen and Dani B. Pfaff

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The image above is the elevation drawing for the Indiana State Library and Historical Building by Pierre & Wright, architects. Indiana Division, Indiana State Library.

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The Indiana Historical Bureau provides programs and opportunities for Indiana's citizens of all ages to learn and teach about the history of their state and its place in the broader communities of the nation and the world.

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